



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **RI Adult Education Professional Development Center, Broadband RI Enter Agreement to Sustain and Enhance Digital Literacy Project**

*Goals include strengthening network of trainers, establishing standard for digital literacy outcomes*

**April 24, 2014 (Providence, RI)** — The Rhode Island Adult Education Professional Development Center (PD Center) and Broadband Rhode Island (BBRI) today announced the launch of an agreement to develop and implement a plan for long-term sustainability of BBRI's Digital Literacy Project to improve adult Internet usage across the state.

As part of the federally funded initiative, BBRI created a digital literacy program for adults, including curriculum and instructor training and established a thriving network of over 200 volunteer and professional digital literacy trainers whose efforts target the state's disadvantaged populations. To date, these instructors delivered digital literacy training to almost 1000 adults through libraries, public housing authorities, adult education organizations and senior centers.

“The question for us was how do we sustain and grow the BBRI Digital Literacy program beyond our current capacity,” said Stuart Freiman, Broadband Program Director, RI Office of Digital Excellence. Because our target populations overlap significantly, “With its focus on assisting educators who work with the state's adult learners, we established a productive working relationship with the PD Center. They are ideally suited to carry forward our important mission of expanding broadband awareness and adoption in order to improve Rhode Islanders' lives.”

The PD Center and BBRI have outlined plans for numerous activities throughout this year that are designed to strengthen the Digital Literacy Project and sustain its impact beyond the grant that was made available under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). In the area of training, the PD Center and BBRI will work in partnership to develop a sustainable digital literacy trainer network, through adult education organizations and libraries that does not rely solely on volunteers.

The work plan for 2014 also includes development of a recognized standard for digital literacy outcomes, and establishment of criteria for evaluating adult learners' readiness to apply digital literacy skills to tasks such as participating in distance learning and completing essential life skills tasks online.

Jill Holloway, director of the PD Center, at the West Bay Collaborative, will coordinate project planning and management under the initiative. Among the project's components, a technology expert will be brought on to upload and align BBRI's work and to train PD Center staff in managing and sustaining it. "The BBRI staff have done an excellent job during their short tenure in laying the groundwork for this effort: from research and awareness campaigns, to the creation of excellent materials and resources, to the actual training of teachers and creating alliances with other programs and agencies in the state. The PD Center is more than pleased to enter this agreement and continue to address the deep digital divide that exists within our workforce and communities."

BBRI's digital literacy training curriculum has become a key component in the effort to prepare Rhode Island learners to compete in a global digital economy. Earlier this year, the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) announced that the BBRI curriculum would be implemented statewide to support all adult education programs in Rhode Island.

#### **About Broadband Rhode Island**

Broadband Rhode Island, an initiative of the Office of Digital Excellence, R.I. Department of Administration, is funded through December 2014 by the State Broadband Data and Development Grant Program (SBDD) as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). The initiative focuses on broadband infrastructure mapping and broadband planning in the State of Rhode Island. Programs address public awareness and education about broadband and study and develop plans to increase adoption rate and broadband usage across all aspects of our lives including in our homes, schools, businesses, libraries, healthcare facilities, public safety and government. To learn more about Broadband Rhode Island please visit: <http://broadband.ri.gov>

#### **About RI Adult Education Professional Development Center**

The RI Professional Development Center (PD Center) delivers high-quality, research-based professional development and technical assistance to Rhode Island's adult education programs and practitioners. Through its leadership and partnerships, the PD Center seeks to support, enhance and promote the network of quality educational opportunities for RI's adult learners. To learn more about the PD Center, please visit: <http://www.riaepdc.org>

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